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ASTRONOMY.

THERE is no science so worthy the attention and the careful study of man as that of Astronomy. It gives a grand and an imposing view of the power of that Almighty Being who said "Let there be light, and there was light"; and it tells of other suns and nobler systems, which revolve in the immensity of space, afar from the ken of frail-sighted man.

In the study of such a science it is necessary to prepare the mind for the reception of truth, by dismissing from it all hastily adopted notions regarding it, and to take nothing for truth which is not supported by the strongest and most conclusive evidence.

There is no science which, more than Astronomy, stands in need of such a preparation, or draws more largely on that intellectual liberality which is ready to adopt whatever is demonstrated, or concede whatever is rendered highly probable, however new and uncommon the points of view may be, in which objects the most familiar may thereby become placed.

Thus the earth on which we stand, and which has served for ages as the unshaken foundation of the firmest structures, is divested by the Astronomer of its immobility, and is found to revolve round an imaginary point in the centre, called the axis, and, besides, whirls with amazing rapidity through boundless space. The Sun and the Moon, which, to untaught eyes, appear as globular bodies, of no great size, are presented to his imagination as vast worlds—the one approaching in magnitude to the earth itself, the other infinitely surpassing it. The Planets, which appear only as stars somewhat brighter than the rest, are to him spacious, elaborate, and habitable worlds; several, vastly greater and more curiously furnished than the earth we inhabit. And the Stars themselves, properly so called, which to ordinary apprehension present only lucid sparks or brilliant atoms, are to him suns of various and transcendent glory—effulgent centres of life and light to myriads of unseen worlds; so that when, after dilating his thoughts to comprehend the grandeur of those ideas his calculations have called up, and exhausting his imagination and the powers of his language to devise similes and metaphors illustrative of the immensity of the scale on which this universe is constructed, he shrinks back to his native sphere, he finds it, in comparison, a mere point;—so lost, even in the minute

system to which it belongs, as to be invisible and unsuspected from some of its principal and remote members.

The magnitudes, distances, arrangement, and motions of the great bodies which make up the visible universe—their constitution, and physical condition, so far as they can be known to us—with their mutual influences and actions on each other, so far as they can be traced by the effects produced, and established by legitimate reasoning—form the assemblage of objects to which the attention of the Astronomer is directed.

But, besides the Stars, and other Celestial Bodies, the Earth itself, regarded as an individual body, is one principal object of the Astronomer's consideration, and, indeed, the chief of all. It derives its importance not only from its proximity, and its relation to us as animated beings, who draw from it the supply of all our wants, but as the station from which we see all the rest, and as the only one among them to which we can, in the first instance, refer for any determinate marks and measures by which to recognize their changes of situation, or with which to compare their distances. To those who, for the first time, have turned their attention to Astronomy, it will, no doubt, seem strange to class the Earth with the Heavenly Bodies, and to assume any community of nature among things apparently so different. For what, in fact, can be apparently more different than the vast and seemingly immeasurable extent of the Earth, and the Stars which appear but as dim specks hardly perceptible. The Earth is dark and opaque, while the Celestial Bodies are brilliant. We perceive in it no motion, while in them we observe a continual change of place, as we view them at different hours of the day or night, or at different seasons of the year. The ancients, accordingly, (one or two of the more enlightened excepted,) admitted no such community of nature; and by thus placing the Heavenly Bodies and their movements without the pale of analogy and experience, effectually intercepted the progress of all reasoning, from what passes here below, to what is going on in the regions where they exist and move. To get rid of this prejudice, therefore, is the first step towards acquiring a knowledge of what is really the case; and you will have made your first effort towards the acquisition of sound knowledge, when you have learned to familiarise yourselves with the idea that the Earth, after all, may be nothing but a Star.